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INTRODUCTION

Having regard to our status as a State party to the Convention on "The Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women" we have produced a brief summary on the legislation adopted by our country for the effective realization of the provisions contained in the said Convention.

Our document presents data relating to the socio-economic situation of the Panamanian Woman, together with details relating to the creation, aims and justification of the Office for Women in the Republic of Panama.

It is important to emphasize that the aspects relating to our legislation do give rise at the present time to some concern in regard to the drawing up of a Family Code which will summarize and bring together the rules governing this subject and which were formerly to be found in a dispersed form. In this respect the existence of the principle of "Equality of Rights" which is contained in the Basic Charters which have operated in our country throughout history has been a significant factor opposed to the "Discrimination Against the Panamanian Woman".

What has already been said does not, however, mean that Discrimination against Women in our country will be found to have disappeared; we consider that it does exist, but with a marked tendency to become reduced as a result of the influence of the social, political and economic factors which can be observed on a worldwide level.

It is also important to emphasize that carrying out the work of orientating and training women in regard to their political and civil duties and rights is determinant in inculcating in them a permanent attitude of defending these rights.

In this respect one of the most important achievements has been the creation of an Office for Women in 1979.

Its basic activities are those of orientation, training, facilitation and instruction according to the needs and circumstances. In order to provide answers to concrete problems and situations the greater part of its activities will be directed towards Education as the eminently preventive means.

This Office operates under the title of "Office for the Promotion and Training of Women" as a department of the National Directorate for the Child and Family of the Ministry for Labour and Social Wellbeing.

SOME SOCIO-ECONOMIC INDICATORS IN REGARD TO WOMEN

Before starting to set out the information regarding the legal provisions and administrative means in respect of women we feel that it would be of value to give some vital statistics concerning women in our Panamanian society, with the object of providing a more real picture of the situation.

It has not escaped our attention that the biological differences which exist between men and women have been at the origin of the attribution of differing roles in society to the two sexes. The woman has, traditionally, been assigned the roles concerned with maternity, child-raising and the management of the home. To the man has been assigned the role of economic provider, with the result that, with a few rare exceptions, political and economic activities have fallen preferentially into masculine hands. The prevailing ideas of the period did not favour women whom some considered to be frankly inferior to men from the point of view of intellectual capacity; for this reason a woman needed to follow a masculine figure, whether father, brother, husband or teacher.

The Industrial Revolution marked the beginning of the changes. With the appearance of factory production and the development of large cities female work began to leave the home.

It was only when women entered the working force that they claimed their rights and demanded equality in the eyes of the law.

In our days, and in our Panamanian society, the number of women who join the work force increases every year. The increasing cost of living has had an enormous influence on this phenomenon, in that the wife feels responsibility towards the family income and for lightening the economic load placed on the husband, the latter often being insufficient to cover the growing needs of all the members of the family.

On the other hand the situation of women is not uniform throughout the whole of the Republic; there is a dual situation, depending on whether it is the country or the town that is involved. In Panama, as in many other Latin American countries, two types of structures co-exist: the rural and the urban. The first retains its memories of older and more traditional societies, representing the primary sector of the economy. The second has developed into the secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy and reflects a more modern anf flexible society.

What has been said above is reflected in the participation of women, which is greater in the town than in the country, since in the latter women are almost totally excluded from agricultural work unlike the situation in the towns where factory, trading and service activities have developed.

As a result of this there has been a largely feminine migratory movement towards the metropolitan area (Panama and Colon and their suburbs), where women hope to find paid employment.

According to the 1980 Population Census the Republic of Panama had a total of 1,824,796 inhabitants of which 925,916 were men and 898,880 were women. This gives a ratio of 103 males for every 100 females.

This ratio obviously varies according to the area concerned: it has been calculated as being 107 women to 100 men in the urban areas and 89 women to 100 men in the rural areas, the explanation of this being found in the migratory movement already described.

In regard to the age distribution of the population it is important to note that a progressive change is taking place in the Panamanian population, due principally to the gradual reduction in fecundity and a reduction in the mortality rate. This situation is reflected in a reduction in the size of the lowest aged groups and the resultant increase in the size of the more elderly groups. That is to say the age structure of the Panamanian population will show an increasing compression at the base of the pyramid, those aged below 15 representing only 40% of the population in 1980 as against 44% in 1960. The group of active age, 15 to 64 years of age, has expanded over the same period from 52% to 56% of the total population.

The Economically Active Population (EAP) amounted to 577,758 persons in 1979, and of these 177,000 were women, representing 30% of the total EAP of the country.

Of the female EAP some 85% (152,950) were classified in the survey as being employed, so that some 24,000 women were unemployed. It is important to note that women have been more severely affected by the problem of unemployment than men. In 1979 some 13.5% of the female EAP were unemployed but only 6.7% of the men, so that the situation is much more critical for women, especially in the metropolitan region where out of every 100 women available for work only 85 are actually employed.

With regard to those principal occupations which have traditionally been assigned to women, and which were allocated to them by society at the beginning of this century, these were almost exclusively related to domestic services, such as laundry work, ironing, cooking, room service and so on.

In 1970, according to the census data, there was a greater diversification in women's occupations and significant percentages were observed in the case of teachers, draughtsmen, administrative and financial tasks and professional and technical workers in science, medicine and other fields. Nevertheless there still remained a considerable percentage of women employed in personal services; in that year they represented 38% of all employed women.

One of the aspects which shows discrimination against women, and despite the legal requirements, is inequality of wages between men and women. According to the 1970 census data and in the population employed in various professional occupations such as architects, engineers and similar fields the median weekly salary for men was B/. 87.10 whereas for women in the same occupations it was B/. 60.00; in the case of specialists in mathematics and the social and economic sciences the situation was not so marked, but then men recorded a median weekly salary of B/. 102.00 against B/. 87.90 for women. This situation could also be observed in 1975 in the non-agricultural activities in the metropolitan area; the overall mean weekly wage for men was B/. 48.56 as against only B/. 35.68 for women.

Another aspect showing discrimination against women relates to positions of authority; as the level of seniority rises so the number of women tends to fall as compared with the number of men. In the case of operatives women account for 43% of the total; in the case of supervisory and control posts the figure falls to 25 %, whilst only 12% of management positions were held by women.

Another variable which we must take into consideration relates to the schooling of women since their level of education in general and their specific preparation for work constitutes an important factor in their mobility up the social ladder.

In Panama no major differences in schooling according to sex can be observed; in fact in some cases any difference present actually favours women.

In the case of higher level education it is important to recognise the positive influence which the University of Panama has had on raising the professional status of both men and women. The participation of women in university registration has shown a rapid increase. In 1960 women represented 38% of the students in our principal courses; twenty years later, in 1980, they accounted for 54% of the total. University statistics show the preference of women for certain disciplines such as Philosophy, Literature, Education, Natural Sciences and Pharmacology, Dentistry and Public Administration: in all these fields women account for over half of registrations.

In regard to illiteracy in the Republic the percentage of this amongst the non-indigenous population aged 10 or over has fallen gradually over the last three decades. In 1950 the percentage of illiterate women was slightly higher than that of illiterate men; by 1960 it was lower, and in 1980 male illiteracy was 12.1% as against a female illiteracy level of 11.6%.

THE LEGAL STATUS OF PANAMANIAN WOMEN

I. The Principle of Equality of Rights

Panamanian Legislation provides the basis of this principle through the rules contained in our Basic Charter, our Codes and other special Laws.

In regard to our Constitutional Law our Basic Charter of 1946, which has been in force in our country for 26 years, extends by Article 97 political rights to all Panamanians, without distinction of sex, establishing that "All Panamanians of more than twenty-one years of age are citizens of the Republic, without distinction of sex." The present Constitution of 1972 repeats, in its Article 118, the text of the article in the Basic Charter of 1946, only varying the age which is necessary for receiving citizenship, stating that "All Panamanians of more than eighteen years of age are citizens of the Republic, without distinction of sex."

A. Rights in the Political Field

The legal status of the Panamanian woman in the political field secures her right to vote in all the elections, plebiscites or public referenda and to be eligible to form a part of all the organizations which are constituted by way of popular elections.

In accordance with the constitution in force they may be selected by popular vote as members of the National Assembly of Departmental Representatives*. In this regard Article 130 states as follows :

> "Article 130 : The National Assembly of Departmental Representatives will consist of as many members as will correspond to the number of departments into which the national territory is divided. Every department will elect a representative and his deputy by popular vote carried out in the same way and on the same day and this election will be for a period of six years."

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* "Asamblea Nacional de Representantes de Corregimientos"

For the election of the President and Vice-President of the Republic Article 157 of the National Constitution, as modified by Amendment Act No.1 dated 5 October 1978 and ratified by Amendment Act No.2 dated 25 October 1978 lays down as follows :

> "Article 157 : The President of the Republic will be elected by popular suffrage, direct and by a majority of votes, for a period of six (6) years. At the same time as the President of the Republic there will be elected, in the same manner and for the same period, a Vice-President who will replace the President in his absence, in accordance with what is laid down in Articles 168 and 169 of this Constitution."

Since 1946 women have been able to vote in all the popular elections to elect the President and Vice-President of the Republic, the Deputies to the National Assembly and to the Town Councils*, and in 1972 they were also able to choose the members of the National Assembly of Departmental Representatives; nevertheless the proportion of voters shows a considerable absence of women, and in relation to their proportion as elected as candidates for popular election posts the figure is not encouraging.

In respect to the carrying out of public functions and the occupation of public positions, and although the entry of women into this field has been slow, no legal provision exists to negate or restrict Panamanian women from access to the same.

Nevertheless there is a marked resistance by managements to offer opportunities under conditions of equality, discrimination in regard to appointments, promotion and conditions of career structure being maintained by means of clearly marked practices.

B. Nationality

Under our Constitutional Law no differences exist by reason of sex in respect of the rights of acquisition, change or retention of nationality.

This allows a woman to marry a foreigner without it affecting her nationality, giving the option to her children to acquire nationality by birth, this being ratified by them when they become of age.

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* 'Concejales'

Article 8 of the Magna Carta lays down the following :

"Article 8 : Panamanian nationality is acquired by birth, by naturalization or by constitutional disposition."

"Article 9 : The following are Panamanian by birth :

1. Those born on the national territory.
2. The children of a father or mother who is Panamanian by birth, born outside the territory of the Republic, if they establish their domicile in the national territory; and
3. The children of a father or mother who is Panamanian by naturalization, born outside the national territory, if they establish their domicile in the Republic of Panama and demonstrate their desire to acquire Panamanian nationality at the latest one year after coming of age."

Article 10, under section 2, lays down that the following may request Panamanian nationality by naturalization :

"Article 10 : The following may request Panamanian nationality by naturalization :

1. Foreigners with three consecutive years of residence in the territory of the Republic who have children born in the latter of a Panamanian father or mother or spouse of Panamanian nationality, if they complete the declaration and provide verification."

C. The right to equal opportunities of work and remuneration

a. Work as an inalienable right

Under our labour law women have the full right to contract for their services in equality with men.

Our Magna Carta has been concerned with raising to constitutional status certain rights for workers, without distinction of sex, in that Article 59 states that work is a right and duty of the individual and hence there is an obligation on the State to draw up economic policies directed towards promoting full employment and towards securing for every worker those conditions necessary for a decent existence.

Article 62 establishes equality of wages or salary without distinction of sex, nationality, age, race, social class or political or religious ideas.

In its turn Article 66 establishes that working agreements or any other pact whatsoever are null and void and hence are not binding on the contractants if they include any stipulations which imply the renunciation, reduction, modification or surrender of any rights operating in favour of the worker. The law will regulate all matters relative to work contracts.

In this respect there are also rules such as that contained in Article 104 of the Labour Code which do however prohibit women from working underground, in mines, subsoils, quarries, or in manual activities in civil construction or in dangerous and unhealthy activities, which in all cases take into account the physical nature of women.

These activities, prohibited by the present Code are no more than those activities which are determined by Agreement No. 89 as being prohibited to women for night shifts.

b. The right to Work Benefits

In regard to work benefits relating to holidays, retirement, vocational risks, age and incapacity for work our legislation makes no differentiations for any classes, apart from that relating to the age of retirement which is 55 for women and 60 for men, this being due to physiological reasons such as average life expectancy, efficiency and the capacity for working.

c. Principles of wage equality

This principle has been elevated to constitutional status in that Article 62 of our constitution lays down the following :

"For equal work under identical conditions there will always be equal wages or salary, whoever is entitled to it, without distinction of sex, nationality, age, race, social class or political or religious ideas."

In its turn Article 10 of the Labour Code states :

"The principle of wage equality is guaranteed: For equal work in the service of the same employer, carried out under equal positions, shifts and conditions of efficiency and duration of the services, there is to correspond equal wages, including in the latter ordinary and extraordinary payments, gratuities, bounties, bonuses, services and

whatsoever sums or goods may be given to a worker by reason of a working relationship."

Violation of the priciple of wage equality permits the affected worker to take legal action with the aim of establishing effective means for reparations in the event of such a violation.

Nevertheless the easiest route for establishing wage equality will consist in improving the vocational and institutional preparation of women so that they can occupy better jobs and can carry them out under efficaceous conditions. In the same way all means leading to an increase in their productive capacity will assist them in working with efficiency and with greater economic possibilities.

d. Maternity

The Constitution and the law have at all times maintained the protection of the female worker in maternity as a State duty to ensure Stability of Employment, offering the opportunity for paid leave before and after the birth and for feeding the newly-born child during working hours. To this end the Political Charter lays down the following in Article 67 :

> "Article 67 : Maternity of the working woman is protected. No pregnant woman may be dismissed during the six weeks preceding childbirth or in the eight weeks which follow, and she is to be granted compulsory leave, remunerated in the same manner as her work, and will retain her employment and all the rights which correspond to her contract. After the reincorporation of the working mother in her job she may not be dismissed before the end of one year, apart from those cases specially provided for in the Law, which also lays down the special conditions for the work of pregnant women."

Article 105 of the Labour Code also lays down the following :

> "The protection of the working woman is a duty of the State."

Furthermore Article 107 of the Labour Code in force lays down that :

> "Every female worker in a state of pregnancy is to be granted compulsory leave remunerated in the same manner as her work, during the six weeks which precede childbirth and the eight weeks which follow it. At no time may the total period of leave be less than fourteen consecutive weeks."

Article 108 of our body of labour laws lays down that :

> "In order to determine the date of commencement of the compulsory paid leave the female worker is to present to the employer a medical certificate in which the probable date of childbirth is stated."

To this end any doctor in paid State service or any of the institutions is to provide the said certificate free of charge.

The same provisions lays down that if, for any reason, the pregnant worker provides services within the period of leave prior to childbirth the employer is obliged to give the corresponding remuneration, plus an equal sum by way of indemnity, without prejudice to the legal sanctions which may correspondingly be imposed according to

> Article 125 : The employed who infringes the provisions of this section will be fined, in favour of the National Treasury, a sum of from one hundred to seven hundred Balboas, imposed by the administrative or juridical labour authority.

In this respect there is also the provision contained in Article 44A of Law 14 dated 27 August 1954 which states as follows :

> "The maternity rest subsidy will be suspended when the insured person does not accept, infringes or abandons the prescribed medical treatment or if she performs remunerated work of any kind during the period of compulsory leave."

What undoubtedly arises from this rule is the fact that the female worker is to have real and effective enjoyment of the leave or rest period, and that there is no other objective but to ensure that she has the direct benefit from it.

> Article 110 states : that if, during the periods of leave before and after childbirth, any illness develops as a consequence of the pregnancy or of the birth, the worker will have the right to have the leave prorogued for the period stated by the medical certificate. The prorogued time will be imputed to the sickness fund to which she has a right.

It is laid down in the same legal order that the period which results from the proroguing of the leave will be integrally restored to the female worker by means of a subsidy from the Social Security Fund, provided that she is affiliated to this and also that the Fund is not obliged to make retribution to the employer for the corresponding elapsed period.

One mode of compulsory paid leave is that laid down in Article 112 which provides that :

> "in the event of an abortion, non-viable birth or any other abnormal case of delivery this shall be established in accord with the exigences of the health of the person concerned, and in accordance with the medical certificate and the prescriptions of the doctor attending the case."

In regard to the periods of leave of pregnant women, both before and after delivery, these may be increased by collective work agreements.

e. Nursing breaks - Maternity rooms

The Labour Code lays down the following in Article 114 :

> "Every female worker when nursing is to be granted, on the premises where she works, a period of fifteen (15) minutes every three hours or, if she prefers, a half-hour twice (2) during her work, for the purpose of feeding her child, and the employer is to provide some means for rest within the possibilities of her work, maintaining a sufficient number of seats or chairs available to the female workers; the time employed to this end will be computed for the purposes of remuneration of the worker as being time effectively worked for the periods as stated above."

The same provision establishes that every employer who employs more than twenty women at his place of work is obliged to furnish a room so that the mothers may feed their children without danger, and that the furnishings are to be provided within the economic possibilities of the employer in the judgement and with the approval of the general or regional labour directorate.

f. Protection of the pregnant woman against dismissal

Article 105 of the Labour Code establishes that "Protection of the maternity of the woman worker is a duty of the State."

Subsequently this principle has been elevated to constitutional status (Article 67).

In this respect Article 106 of the Code lays down that the woman who is found to be in a state of pregnancy may only be dismissed from her employment for a justified cause, and subject to judicial authorization, and that in every case in which a pregnant woman worker receives a notification of dismissal or of termination of her working relationship without prior authorization by the competent judicial authority, the worker must present to the employer or any other labour authority a medical certificate of her pregnancy within twenty (20) days following the above notification. Under these conditions the worker has the right to be immediately reintegrated into her employment and to payment of her remuneration as from the date of dismissal. After the period of twenty days as laid down in this rule, and up to the end of the following three months, the woman worker may request reintegration but with the right to receive wages only as from the presentation of the corresponding medical certificate. In the event of renunciation by the employer the worker may request reintegration by way of the formalities of the corresponding procedure.

This provision recognizes the privileges of maternity to establish that the pregnant woman, and the woman worker for a period of one year as from her reintegration may only be dismissed if she gives due cause which entitles the employer to terminate the working relationship, as laid down in Article 213, and subject to judicial authorization.

g. Requirements for the dismissal procedure

A woman worker in a state of pregnancy may only be dismissed as a result of :

a. A justified cause.

b. Prior authorization to dismiss on the part of the authorities having jurisdiction over labour.

The cause shall be established by irrefutable proof.

h. Actions against illegal dismissal

The first means open to the female worker who, when in a state of pregnancy, receives notification of dismissal without prior judicial authorization, is to present to the employer or any other labour authority a medical certificate of her pregnancy; if she does this she has the right to immediate reintegration with the payment of wages due from the date of dismissal. This must be done within the first twenty days from this date, and up to the end of three months she may request reintegration but with the right to receive only those wages due as from the presentation of the corresponding medical certificate.

In the event of renunciation the worker may request reintegration from the special labour jurisdiction. On the order for reintegration the unjustifiably dismissed worker must be reincorporated into her habitual work under the same conditions as those existing before the dismissal.

In the event of renunciation by the employer the Industrial Judge*, on petition by the party, may order compliance by writ or may impose compulsory or progressive pecuniary penalties until the order for reintegration is complied with, as set out in Article 1062.

i. The pregnant woman in regard to the reduction of personnel

Pregnant women may in the last resort be dismissed if this is absolutely necessary and subject to compliance with the legal formalities.

j. Overtime

Overtime for the pregnant woman is prohibited, together with shift work, night-work and mixed working. Compliance with this prohibition is relative in practice, since work exists which is necessarily carried out by women who provide services in this state, and because of the shortage of trained workers in these posts, as is the case with nurses, doctors and paramedical staff who provide their services under systems of shifts, night-work and mixed working.

k. The pregnant woman as public servant

The female public servant is not protected by her administrative career or by any other provision, but bases her pregnancy rights on Article 67 of the National Constitution.

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* 'Juez de Oficio'

Claims for her rights must be pursued through the administrative channels, the procedure to be followed being in accordance with that laid down in the administrative ordinance, this being similar in practice to the labour procedure.

D. EDUCATION

In our country no type of discrimination exists, by reason of sex, in matters of education.

The National Constitution sets out the following in its Article 86 :

> "Article 86 : it is the responsibility of the State to organize and to direct education in the national territory and to guarantee the right and the duty to receive it."

Similarly our Constitution establishes, in Article 89, free education at pre-university levels. The rule states as follows :

> "Article 89 : Official education is free at all pre-university levels. The first level of teaching or general basic education is compulsory. The fact of it being free implies, for the State, the need to provide for the student all the tools necessary for his training up to completing his basic general education. Free education does not prevent the establishment of a right to paid registration at the non-compulsory levels.

E. The Situation of Women under Penal Legislation

At the present time in Panama a classical court code operates, being a copy of the Italian model of 1890, the which contains some punishable offences such as adultery, bigamy, flagrant concubinage and freedom from punishment for the crime of homicide committed by a husband against his wife when surprised flagrante delicto in adultery; however this situation has been corrected in the new penal legislation which will come into force in March 1983.

It should be pointed out that this new code elevates to the status of an offence the failure to perform family duties, in this way filling in a large lacuna in our legislation which gave rise to unjust situations; this section appears under Chapter V dealing with offences against the family structure and marital status.

In regard to the contents of the Penal Code, and given the importance of these, we transcribe below the articles which refer to this section :

Failure to fulfil family duties :

Article 213 : One who, being obliged to provide for another the indispensable means for subsistence, neglects the fulfilment of his alimentary duties, will be punished with imprisonment for 6 months to one year or with 50 to 100 days' fine.

Paragraph : For the application of this Article the Judge will determine the economic resources and situation of the person obliged to provide food. If it results irrefutably that he does not possess the economic resources the judge will exonerate him.

Article 214 : The penalty set out in the previous article will be increased by a third when the person, in order to evade the fulfilment of his alimentary duty, gives up his work, disposes of his goods or in any other manner provokes his insolvency.

Article 215 : One who fails to fulfil or abuses the rights which are granted to him in the exercise of paternal authority, guardianship or tutorship, to the evident prejudice of the child, pupil or unfit person, will be punished with imprisonment for 6 months to one year and 20 to 60 days' fine, with in addition the loss and incapacity to exercise the respective rights or positions.
If such offences are committed to the prejudice of a separated but not divorced spouse, of a brother or sister who does not live in the family of the person concerned, of an uncle, nephew or relative of the second degree, criminal processes will not follow unless by formal accusation of the offended person.

F. Slavery of women and Prostitution

The Penal Code, by Articles 295 and 296 characterizes and penalizes Procuration as discredited conduct which damages and places in peril the values of security and sexual honour, contrary to the good consummation and order of the family.

Prostitution does not, in our country, have the status of a criminal offence but has been made the subject of special regulation which has qualified prostitution as a chargeable behaviour pattern, in spite of which executive decrees have been issued on the subject of public health and morality, by means of which the State assumes the task, through the Ministries of Government and Justice and Public Health, of "Preventing and suppressing prostitution", to castigate wantonness and licentiousness or to adopt measures conducive to the prevention and cure of venereal disease.

There exist Decrees and Laws within the Panamanian Penal Code which relate to prostitution, and these are set out below.

Law No. 15 dated 25 January 1961 states in its Article No.2 :

Article No.2 : The police authorities will proceed to judgement on a verbal report or on a complaint by a private person or police officers or officers of the Public Ministry in respect of any person or persons who commit one or more of the following acts.

a. Procurers and those who promote, favour or facilitate prostitution or corruption and who have been charged or convicted more than once for the commission of such acts.

b. Those who directly or indirectly exploit prostitution inside or outside the country, participating in the profits of this traffic and basing their mode of life on it. The penalty will be detention for three to six months for the first occasion on which the Law is applied, 6 months to one year for the second occasion and detention for two years in subsequent cases.

Law No. 4 dated 17 January 1966 states in its Article No.1 :

Article No.1 : A woman of more than eighteen (18) years of age may be declared a "Subject for Rehabilitation" if she is found to fall under one of the following headings :

a. Street-walkers or those known to be of ill-repute and who indulge in practices of wantonness or licentiousness.

b. Procurers, those who promote, favour and facilitate prostitution or corruption.

c. Those who directly or indirectly exploit prostitution, participating in the benefits of this traffic and basing their mode of life on it.

Our Health Code also envisages legislative resources by way of Law 66 dated 10 November 1947, Volume Three, Heading two, chapter three where Articles 146 and 147 state that :

Article 146 : Those suffering from veneral diseases will be controlled by the General Directorate for Public Health, at the same epidemiological centre as those suffering from transmissible diseases and will be subject to reporting, isolation, surveillance and the obligation including hospitalization. These means may be applied to sufferers, suspects and contacts who, in the judgement of the health authorities, may constitute a risk for others.

Article 147 : Prophylaxis and the treatment of venereal diseases remain the responsibility of the executive departments of public health, especially district health units and health centres dealing with prevention, out-patient treatment, epidemiology and health education.

The Administrative Code also makes reference to prostitution in its Articles 1289, 1290, 1293, 1294, 1295 and 1296.

Article 1289 : Police employees must prevent the exposure to the public, the sale or distribution of statues, drawings, pictures or any other type of indecent product.

Article 1290 : The police will not permit the representation in theatres or other public places of dramatic works which present obscene or indecent acts or expressions or matters contrary to morals and good customs.

Article 1293 : Women of ill-repute, drunkards and tramps are not permitted inside parks and public places. The police will expel them from such places with fines of one to ten Balboas or the equivalent detention for those who refuse to leave.

Article 1294 : It is prohibited to rent rooms, houses or any part of them in centres of population to street-walkers or those known to be of ill-repute.

Article 1295 : The police will not allow the establishment of houses or meeting places intended for wanton or licentious practices. The individual who has responsibility for a house or place in which meetings are held for any of the above objectives will be fined twelve to fifty Balboas and those who take part in such meetings will incur a fine of ten to fifty Balboas.

Article 1296 : It is the responsibility of the National Board for Hygiene to indicate the area in which the women covered by Article 1294 may live and to lay down the health regulations with which they must comply, and for the provincial governors to enact regulations to prevent the corruption of minors and the increase in public immorality.

Decree No. 857 dated 4 August 1951 designates the Ministry for Governement and Justice as the competent authority for fulfilling the measures dealing with morality and public health.

The above Decree lays down the following in this respect :

Article 1 : It is the responsibility of the Ministry for Government and Justice, of the Provincial Governors and of the Municipal Mayors, with the cooperation of the National and Secret Police, to prevent and suppress prostitution. Those suffering from venereal diseases will be controlled by the General Directorate for Public Health, both from the point of view of diagnosis and also from that of adequate medical treatment, and for education concerning individual prophylaxis, under the conditions determined by the Health Code.

Article 2 : The Guardian of Minors will cooperate with the police and health authorities in the application of preventive and educative measures applicable to minors under 18 years of age and in relation to the exercise of prostitution and other similar antisocial activities.

Article 3 : The National and Secret Police will prevent, by all legal means, clandestine promotion, other exploitation and whatsoever other practices which affect morals and public health and which are classified as possible offences by the Administrative Code. To this end they may detain those persons discovered in the very act of carrying out libidinous activities in public places or in hotels or in houses of call intended for use as brothels.

Nevertheless they may also detain, even when not discovered in flagrante, those women of known ill-repute when responsible persons make accusations that they are suffering from venereal diseases or when they are encountered in suspicious activities late at night or in places which it may be presumed to be devoted to the exercise of prostitution.

Article 4 : Women arrested by the police as prostitutes, convicted or presumed, must be placed immediately under the orders of the Headquarters of the Inspector General of the Secret Police or of the functionaries or officials commissioned for this purpose within the Republic so that information on the case may be given to the Directorate for Public Health with the aim of examination and adequate medical treatment.

If those detained are of age the Police must also notify the Mayor of the respective District immediately so that he may be aware of the case and may then decide to investigate it and consult the competenet functionaries of the General Directorate for Public Health. Those held to be responsible for contagion with veneral disease must be placed under the orders of the Public Ministry.

If those detained are under 18 years of age the Police must immediately advise the Judge Guardian of Minors so that there may be adopted, in conjunction with the General Directorate for Public Health, those measures which may be necessary for the treatment and improvement of the conduct of those concerned.

Article 5 : The police may detain in the same manner the owners or managers of hotels, boarding houses, lodgings and other premises where it is found that prostitution is being carried out. Those detained for this reason will be subjected to the orders of the Public Prosecutor of the Circuit concerned, for the purpose of summary procedings for violation of the relevant provisions of the Penal Code.

Advice will also be given to the Governor of the Province concerned and to the Ministry for Government and Justice for the purposes of closing down the brothels and of applying correctional punishment to the malefactors when this is done in accordance with the legal provisions.

Article 6 : The owners and managers of call houses or other premises in which prostitution is being exercised may also be convicted as vagrants, if foreigners, as undesirable persons, on the basis of the laws regulating these matters.

Article 7 : As from the coming into effect of this decree those permits formerly granted as licences to operate hotels of the second category, lodgings, etc., will be considered as provisional. The Ministry for Government and Justice, advised by the National and Secret Police and by the inspectors of the Directorate of Public Health, will investigate the conditions of safety, cleanliness and morality as shown by such establishments, together with the location of the building and its relationship to its surroundings, with the object of determining if it could or could not continue to provide a service for the public.

Apart from the sanctions already existing on the basis of the above-mentioned articles the following should also be quoted :

Decree 149 dated 20 May 1949 :

By virtue of the development of the provisions contained in Articles 1 and 3 of the Preliminary Heading of Volume I and Articles 146 and 147 of Chapter V, Heading I of Volume III of the Health Code in regard to the suppression of prostitution measures have been laid down concerning Social Hygiene and Public Morals.

Article 1 : The exercise of prostitution is prohibited in an absolute manner within the perimeter of the town and population and within other areas as determined by the Public Health Committee.

In those areas in which prostitution is not prohibited it is however subject to inspection and regulation by the health authorities.

Article 2 : For the purposes of social hygiene and public morality the Department of Public Health will control and regulate the functioning of hotels, boarding houses, lodging houses, canteens, nightclubs and cabarets in accordance with the powers granted to them by Article 91 of the Health Code.

Article 3 : Any woman proven to have exercised prostitution in places which contravene the prohibition established in Article 1 will be punished in accordance with the sanctions laid down in the present decree.

The National Assembly, through Law 4 dated 17 January 1966, lays down means in regard to Feminine Delinquency and the Feminine Rehabilitation Centre.

ARTICLE 1 : Women of 18 years of age and above may be declared a "Subject for Rehabilitation" in the following cases :

a. Dipsomaniacs and drug addicts, who become inebriated or intoxicated in public places and also in private places if, when in this state, they disturb the peace and constitute a danger for others.

b. Street-walkers of known ill-repute dedicated to practices of wantonness or licentiousness.

c. Procurers, those who promote, favour or facilitate prostitution or corruption.

d. Those who directly or indirectly exploit prostitution, participating in the profits of this traffic and basing their mode of life on it.

e. Those who, being fit for work, live habitually on the begging of others, exploiting the sick or crippled and encouraging them to beg.

f. Those who, in any manner and in a habitual form, promote or favour the intoxication of minors.

At the present time our Legislation, in the Official Gazette No. 19,667 of 6 October 1982, which corresponds to our Penal Code, sets out the following in Chapter III concerning Corruption, Procuring and Pandering :

ARTICLE 226 : One who perverts or facilitates the corruption of a person of more than 12 years of age but who has not reached 15, performing with that person an immodest act or inducing them to practice or to witness such an act, will be punished by imprisonment for six months to 1 year.

ARTICLE 228 : One who, for desire of money or to satisfy other desires, promotes or facilitates the prostitution of persons of one or other sex will be punished by imprisonment for 2 to 4 years.

ARTICLE 229 : The punishment for committing the above acts will be 3 to 5 years imprisonment in the following cases :

a. If the victim is considerably younger than 12 years of age or a boy who has not reached 14.
b. When it is by way of deception, violence, abuse of authority or any other means of intimidation or coercion.
c. When it is committed by close relatives of the victim or a teacher, guardian or any other person to whom has been entrusted the guardianship or custody for reasons of family violence or for education or instruction.
d. When the person concerned is a habitual or professional delinquent in respect of such offences.

ARTICLE 230 : One who is maintained, if only partially, by a person who exercises prostitution, exploiting the profits arising from this activity, will be punished by imprisonment for 1 to 2 years or by admission to an agricultural camp or a work establishment for a period equivalent to the maximum punishment which would be applicable.

G. The situation of the Woman in regard to Family Rights

Current legislation in regard to Family Rights starts from two antinomic principles, namely the rules of the Civil Code which deal with Private Rights and which regulate the rights of private persons, allowing them full liberty of action so long as this does not involve that which is strictly prohibited, and the constitutional rules covering family rights, to which the Social Rights conform and also the Public Rights, which determines that public institutions can only do what the law orders and also that, in regard to the social nuances of the said legislation, the State offers greater protection to the more disadvantages groups, from the socio-economic point of view.

The legislation passed by the State from 1904 to the present time demonstrates its great interest in providing juridical answers to those problems and necessities which are most strongly felt by the Panamanian family, the reason why there are so many laws, decrees and other regulations, as in the cases of education and health; this has given rise to an obvious dispersion of the rules protecting the social well-being of the family amongst various legal texts and codes.

In spite of the difficulties facing our family rights, such as the non-existence of tribunals to facilitate finding solutions to cases of divorce, adoption, etc., of the lack of a Family Code and of the educational and economic shortages in a high percentage of Panamanian homes, our legislation has established provisions which recognize the equality of the woman in respect to the man within family legislation. It is held that :

"The National Constitution now in force, and by way of various provisions, indicates the duty of the State to protect the family and, equally, marriage and maternity."

a. Marriage : Article 52 of our Constitution states that "marriage is the legal basis of the family, based on the equality of rights of the spouses, and may be dissolved in accordance with the Law".

For its part the Civil Code, in developing this matter, establishes various regulations and the requirements which have to be met for the celebration of marriage, both from the formal point of view and also such as the conditions which must be established, between the contractants.

By way of an example it may be noted that marriage is prohibited in the case of girls under 12 and boys under 14; it is also prohibited in the case of those under age without the prior and express consent of those who exercise paternal authority or tutelage over them; in the case of widows during the 301 days following the death of their husband or before their confinement when they are found to be in a state of gestation.

The differences in age are related to puberty, consulting the scientific aspects which sustain these from a study of the psychic and physiological development of the human being. In regard to the special case of the widow to contract a new marriage this is, rather than a discrimination, an aspect which takes into account the fact that the gestation process concerns the woman but not the man.

b. De facto marriage : Given the high figures for consensual union in our country provision is made, both in the Constitution of 1946 and also that of 1972, for the legalization of the sui generis situation of de facto marriage, making consensual unions comparable to a civil marriage in all its juridical effects.

In particular the Constitutional Article 53 establishes the following on this matter :

> "The de facto union between persons legally capable of contracting marriage, maintained during five consecutive years under conditions of singularity and stability confers all the effects of civil marriage.
>
> To this end it is sufficient for the persons concerned to request jointly from the Civil Registrar the registration of the de facto marriage; this may be done through a mayor*. When this request for marriage has not been made it may still be confirmed, for the purpose of claiming their rights, by one or other of the spouses concerned, by way of the processes laid down by the Law. Nevertheless the registration may be opposed or challenged by the Public Ministry in the interests of morals, the law or of third parties having rights which are susceptible of being affected by the registration, if the declaration was made contrary to the actual facts of the case."

This institution has had major repercussions in the field of the family, by legalizing a customary practice in many areas which has, on many occasions, given rise to a situation of injustice, abandonment and the helplessness of the children of the mother, from the economic, social and juridical points of view.

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* 'corregidor'

c. Divorce : By Article 52 the National Constitution establishes that marriage may be dissolved in accordance with the Law, which indicates to us that divorce is incorporated in our juridical ordinances.

On this subject Article 114 of the Civil Code establishes the following as grounds for divorce :

"ARTICLE 114 : The following are grounds for divorce :

1. Adultery by the wife;
2. Flagrant concubinage by the husband;
3. An attempt by one of the spouses against the life of the other;
4. Cruel treatment, if to the danger of the life of one of the spouses or of both or if domestic peace and tranquility is impossible;
5. The proposal by the husband to prostitute the wife;
6. An attempt by the husband or by the wife to corrupt their children, or to prostitute their children or to concur in their corruption or prostitution;
7. The absolute abandonment on the part of the husband of his duties as spouse or as father or, on the part of the wife, of her duties as spouse or as mother.
8. Habitual drunkenness, except in the case when this had existed at the time of the marriage;
9. De facto separation for more than four years;
10. Permanent insanity, judicially declared as such;
11. The mutual consent of the spouses."

This limitative enumeration of reasons takes into account the gravity of the same: considering in this way the adultery of the wife, which occupies the category of major gravity, placed above "An attempt by one of the spouses against the life of the other" (reason 3) and flagrant concubinage by the husband (reason 2), as a discriminatory situation in relation to men, referring to the extraconjugal or extramatrimonial sexual relations of both and constituting an offence against the unity and stability of the marriage.

d. Establishment of domicile : In our legislation the domicile, in certain cases, is fixed according to the civil state or condition of the persons concerned, and in this regard Article 83 of the Civil Code establishes, as a general rule, that the spouses must establish the conjugal domicile by common agreement, but in the absence of any express declaration it is to be understood that the wife adopts that of the husband.

In order to re-affirm the proposal of the above-cited rule the legislator has set out in the text of Article 1122 of the Civil Code that in the absence of an express declaration of domicile "the wife is obliged to follow her husband wherever he fixes his residence".

Since in the majority of cases, as a result of adequate information and opportunity, the wife is unaware of the right conceded to her by Article 83 of the Civil Code to establish the conjugal domicile by common agreement, by means of an express declaration, this means that by virtue of the above-cited provision she is obliged to follow her husband to the place in which the latter establishes his residence.

e. Administration of her goods : In accordance with our current legislation the Panamanian women has the right to acquire, administer and inherit goods, without any restrictions being established by reason of her civil state.

Nevertheless the Commercial Code retains certain provisions of equivocal interpretation, and even though they are not applied in practice, reflect an image which does not correspond to the equality of rights which is being fought for today. Such rules are contemplated in Articles 9, 26, 27 and 31 which are quoted below :

"ARTICLE 9 : Any woman who carries out a commercial act on her own behalf or in association with other persons may not claim any benefit granted by a foreign law to persons of her sex and for the result of the commercial act carried out by her."

"ARTICLE 26 : Persons of age may validly confirm the obligations contracted for commercial acts, executed by them during their minority. In the same way those mercantile acts executed by the wife without the express or tacit licence of the husband will be valid when these are the subject of subsequent ratification by the latter."

"ARTICLE 27 : The declaration of nullity of marriage revalidates those commercial acts executed by the wife without authorization of the husband."

"ARTICLE 31 : A married woman will not be considered as a merchant, except when she carries out commercial negotiations separately from those of the husband or in partnership with him."

f. Parental Authority : By constitutional mandate parental authority belongs to both progenitors. In this respect Article 54 tells us :

"ARTICLE 54 : Parental authority is the combination of the duties and rights which fathers possess in regard to their children.

Parents are obliged to feed, educate and protect their children, so that they may have a good upbringing and a satisfactory physical and spiritual development and to respect and assist them.

The Law regulates the exercise of parental authority in accordance with social interest and the benefit of the children."

It should be pointed out that the system of paternal authority, and as its subsidiary maternal authority, as established in Article 187 of the Civil Code, has been reformed by Law 107 dated 8 October 1973 to read as follows :

"ARTICLE 5 : Article 187 of the Civil Code will become as follows : Article 187 : Parents possess, jointly, authority over their under age and unemancipated children, and the children are obliged to obey them, whilst remaining under their authority and always to show them respect".

It is to be observed that, in the event of divergency in the exercise of parental authority the decision regarding the said situation will be made by the Minors' Guardianship Tribunal*. In this respect Article 139-A of the Civil Code states :

"ARTICLE 139-A : In the event of differences between the parents in regard to the direction of the character of their children it is the responsibility of the Minors' Guardianship Tribunal* to decide on what best meets the interests of the minor."

In regard to the status of legitimate and illegitimate children all distinction as to the legitimacy of them has been abolished.

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* 'Tribunal Tutelar de Menores'

g. Filiation : The Constitution, by Article 55, grants equality to children in the eyes of the Law, eliminating any qualification whatsoever in regard to the nature of the filiation (Art. 54).

In regard to the acknowledgement, proof or contesting of paternity Article 56 of the Constitution establishes the following :

"ARTICLE 56 : The Law will regulate the investigation of paternity. Any qualification regarding the nature of filiation is abolished. No declaration whatsoever will be made which establishes differences in regard to the birth or civil state of the parents in the instruments of registration or in any attestation, certificate of baptism or certificate relating to filiation."

Such acknowledgement may be effected by the legal presumption of marriage or a voluntary act of the parent: and for a judicial declaration or compulsory acknowledgement that which refers to the acknowledgement, proof and contesting of maternity is easily verified since the same presents evident external signs such as the pregnancy and delivery.

It should be pointed out that our Constitution establishes the bases for the creation of an organization designed to protect the family with the aim of promoting paternity and maternity in the following Article 58 :

"ARTICLE 58 : The State will create an organization designed to protect the family with the aim of :

1. Promoting responsible paternity and maternity by way of family education;
2. Institutionalizing the education of the young in specialized centres to serve the children of workers, particularly those of public servants; and
3. Protecting minors and taking care of and socially re-adapting those who have been abandoned, disadvantaged, those in moral danger or those with disturbed behaviour.

The law organizes and determines the functioning of the special jurisdiction of minors and will, amongst other functions, supervise investigations into paternity, the abandonment of families and problems of juvenile conduct."

h. Food : On this matter Article 111 of the Civil Code states :

"ARTICLE 111 : The husband is obliged to meet the cost of the food and other needs of the family. The wife will contribute to such costs in proportion to her economic state.
Conflicts of right which arise from the application of this article will be decided by a special trial in accordance with the procedural rules for such trials."

On this particular point it should be noted that a series of reforms have been introduced, with some additional provisions. As an example of this Law 107 dated 8 October 1973 states :

"By food is to be understood everything that is essential for the sustenance, housing, clothing and medical assistance, according to the social standing of the family.
Also included is the education of the dependant, without limit of age. Parents are obliged to meet the costs demanded by the education of the dependant if the studies are carried out with profit, both in regard to time and also to academic achievement. The competent authority will consider these circumstances and such others as are felt to be of value in determining the needs of the dependant."

As is indicated by Article 111 it is established that, under our law, both parents are obliged to provide for the costs of the food and other needs of the family.

In Articles 149 to 157 the Civil Code contains other special rules relating to maintenance for the wife in the event of divorce, separation and nullity of the marriage; it may be pointed out that such provisions are the obsolete juridical rules.

SPECIAL LAWS

SPECIAL LAWS

1. Law 31 dated 24 February 1951, by which the InterAmerican agreements were approved: one on political rights and the other of the civil rights of the woman (Official Gazette No. 11,443 of 21 March 1951).

2. Law 40 dated 2 February 1967, by which was approved Agreement No. 3 relating to the employment of women before and after childbirth (Official Gazette No. 15,816 of 3 March 1967).

3. Cabinet Decree 180 dated 4 June 1970, by which was approved Agreement No. 89 relating to night work by women employed in industry (Official Gazette No. 16,645 of 13 July 1970).

4. Law 4 dated 27 May 1980, by which was approved the Agreement on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (Official Gazette No. 19,331 dated 3 June 1981).

5. Decree 21 dated 30 November 1981. This laid down the provisions for the application of the Agreement on maximum weight (Official Gazette No. 19,474 of 30 December 1981).

6. Decree 15 dated 30 June 1982, by which was reformed letter c) of Article 1 of Decree 21 dated 30 November 1981 (Official Gazette No. 19,621 of 2 August 1982).

7. Law 18 dated 22 September 1982, by which the Penal Code of the Republic was adopted (Official Gazette No. 19,667 of 6 October 1982).

8. Law 24 dated 19 February 1951, by which the Minors' Guardianship Tribunal (Tribunal Tutelar de Minores) was created (Official Gazette No. 11,433 of 9 March 1951).

9. Law 57 dated 19 December 1951, by which the school meals service was instituted (Official Gazette No. 11,669 of 28 December 1951).

10. Law 54 dated 23 December 1954, by which the procedural process regarding food and maintenance was reorganized (Official Gazette No. 12,562 of 11 January 1955).

11. Decree Law 17 dated 23 August 1958, by which was created and organized an Institution for Infant Assistance (Institución de Asistencia Infantil) called the CHILDRENS' HOSPITAL (HOSPITAL DEL NIÑO) (Official Gazette No. 13,635 of 8 September 1958).

12. Cabinet Decree 401 dated 29 December 1970, by which Health Committees (Comités de Salud) for communities were established, defining their objectives and integrating their work with that of the Ministry for Health (Official Gazette No. 16,779 of January 1971).

13. Cabinet Decree 168 dated 27 July 1971, by which was created the Educational Insurance (Seguro Educativo) (Official Gazette No. 16,913 of 6 August 1971).

14. Decree 214 dated 9 May 1955, by which was created the Child Guidance Clinic (Clínica de Guía Infantil) within the Childrens' Hospital (Official Gazette No. 13,158 of 29 January 1957).

15. Law 107 dated 8 October 1973, by which various provisions of the Civil Code were reformed, supplemented and derogated (Official Gazette No. 17,457 of 23 October 1973).

16. Law 100 dated 30 December 1974, by which the Civil Register (Registro Civil) was re-organized (Official Gazette No. 17,774 of 4 February 1975).

17. Law 84 dated 29 November 1963, by which Article 1165-A of the Civil Code was enacted and Article 65 was added to Law 60 of 1946 (De Facto Marriage) (Matrimonio de Hecho) (Official Gazette No. 15,017 of 11 December 1963).

18. Decree 139 dated 6 August 1941, by which Law 52 dated 20 March 1941 was regulated (Official Gazette No. 8,584 of 18 August 1941).

INFORMATION CONCERNING THE OFFICE FOR WOMEN

I. The antecedents of the creation of the Office for Women

As a result of the request made to the Panamanian Government through the Panamanian Delegation to the Inter-American Committee for Women, in regard to the creation of an Office for Women, the Panamanian Government gave its response to the International Community by creating this Department in June 1979, in this way fulfilling the promise made to the United Nations and the Organization of American States. Formerly dispersed efforts had been made in our country on behalf of women, so it was convenient for the Government to assume leadership in this matter, since women account for half the population of Panama.

II. General Objectives of the Department for the Promotion and Training of Women* (Office for Women)

1. To promote the socio-economic development of Women, in this way strenghthening their participation within the family nucleus and within society.
2. To favour positive activity in Panamanian society to the end that women can find their complete fulfilment under conditions of equality and equilibrium.
3. To ensure that Panamanian women are conscious of the importance of their incorporation in the national development programmes.
4. To carry out actions to the end that women may have real access to new and more diverse fields of activity at higher levels of execution, responsibility and remuneration.
5. To promote the incorporation into Panamanian positive law of those legal rules which will ensure the effective validity of full equality for women.
6. To coordinate those programmes which are being realized in the country for the benefit of women.

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* 'Departamento de Promoción y Capacitación de la Mujer'

III. Functions of the Department

1. To organize seminars for the intellectual, cultural, social, political and economic promotion of women.
2. To design and develop programmes for training and guidance.
3. To carry out and coordinate investigations with a view to detecting women's problems.
4. To offer talks, conferences and round tables for training women in various fields.
5. To coordinate, with the various inter-related departments, the working plans realized in the communities.
6. To advise those women's groups which already exist or which are to be created in the various areas.
7. To supervise and evaluate the programmes for the promotion and training of women.
8. To carry out an ongoing investigation of the situation of women at national level.
9. To promote the training of the personnel who work on the various programmes of the Department.
10. To promote free legal aid to women of limited means.
11. To promote self-management programmes with the objective of strengthening family unity and enabling them to improve their economic circumstances.

IV. Work programmes of the Department for the Promotion and Training of Women

A. Promotional Programmes

The promotional programmes have, as their final objective, to offer guidance to women concerning the national duty and the present situation of women, allowing them to possess those judgement factors for understanding and interesting themselves in the problems of the country. The family life of every woman is very important for her effective participation in groups and ultimately in the community, so that great importance is accorded to seminars for guidance in family life.

Amongst the subjects offered in these Seminars are the following :

1. National Realities and the Situation of Women in Panama.
2. Seminars for Guidance in family life.
   a. Family Relationships. Family Dynamics.
   b. Responsible Parenthood.
   c. Stages in the development of the child and adolescent.
   d. Family budgets.
   e. Nutrition.
   f. Alcoholism.
   g. Sexual Education.
   h. Guidance in regard to Cancer.
   i. Human Relationships and Communication.
   j. The Development of the Community.

It is very important to emphasize that feminine group organizations in various communities in the country should give priority to women with limited resources, and technical advice on Social Work is given in an ongoing manner for the strengthening and continuity of the groups.

Under the Sponsorship of the Inter-American Committee for Women a Seminar has been organized on Trade Union Communication, directed by women belonging to workers' unions.

Our programme envisages Free Legal Advice (procedures for food allowances, nationality formalities, filiation procedings) for women of limited means; finally socio-educative and recreational programmes are held, making it possible to establish close relationships between groups in such a way that it will give rise to an interchange of ideas and experiences which will help to strengthen them.

B. Training programmes

The training programmes have, as their objective, to train women in various activities by means of which they can arrive at an understanding which will allow them to improve their socio-economic levels.

These courses give them the capability to obtain incomes, either by means of the formation of small self-management shops, working in their own house or outside.

The Department offers seminars for training in the formation of small self-management shops and also offers a seminar on this subject under the sponsorship of the Inter-American Committee for Women, directed towards all our new groups and to other governmental offices which carry out programmes for women.

Amongst the courses which we offer are the following :

a. Course on the making of cushions, pillows and curtains.
b. Course on the production of typical Panamanian foods and sweets.
c. Course on cutting-out and making-up materials.
d. Handicrafts courses.
   d1. Doll-making
   d2. Making flowers, flower arrangements and similar handcrafts.
   d3. Making hammocks.
   d4. Basketwork.
   d5. Agricultural training.
e. First Aid Courses. These courses are offered principally in rural centres which are far away from health centres.

Projects of the Department include strengthening the Agricultural Training programmes and extending the cover to other rural areas, offering courses , the making of toys and other wooden products and beekeeping programmes with the aim of forming new self-management groups.

At the present moment a Project for small self-management businesses is in the execution stage: there are, at the present moment, two groups which are forming workshops for the production of cushions, pillows and curtains and for Panamanian Delicacies (typical foods and sweets), hammocks and horticulture. Also at the stage of final organization are three feminine groups engaged in the production of articles of clothing and in the production, processing and handling of food products.

In order to promote the work which the groups are carrying out exhibitions are arranged in the central points of our capital.

V. Coordinated actions and policy at Governmental level

It is the policy of the Panamanian government to establish programmes and projects which will contribute towards the integral incorporation of Panamanian women in the development plans; incorporation of women in these plans will be effected by interinstitutional united action which will guarantee the objectives of the participation of women in the plans in an integral and ongoing manner. The creation of the National Commission for the Integration of Women in Development* reflects this interest; this will be integrated through the High Level Support Committee and a Technical Committee**.

The National Commission is coordinated by the person who acts as the Director of the Office for Women and at the same time fulfils the functions of Technical Secretary to this Commission.

The Technical Committee is integrated through governmental and non-governmental representatives and by the organisations which develop programmes for women.

The governmental representation is integrated through the Ministry for Labour and Social Wellbeing, the Ministry for Planning and Economic Policy, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry for Commerce and Industry, the Ministry for Agriculture, the Ministry of Education and the General Directorate for the Development of the Community (DIGEDECOM).

The High Level Support Committee is formed from women who hold high office in local government, such as Ministers, Vice-Ministers, Directors and Sub-Directors of Autonomous Bodies, Magistrates, Governors, Legislators, etc.

Through the National Commission for the Integration of Women in Development there has been drawn up the Project for a Women's Company for the Production, Processing and Handling of Food Products***.

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* 'Comisión Nacional para la Integración de la Mujer al Desarrollo'

** 'Comité de Apoyo de Alto Nivel y un Comité Técnico'

*** 'Sociedad de Mujeres para la Producción, Elaboración y Manipulación de Alimentos'

General Description of the Project

PROJECT FOR THE PROVINCE OF COLON

NAME OF THE PROJECT :	"Association for the Production, Processing and Handling of Food Products"*
NATIONAL COUNTERPART ORGANIZATION :	Interinstitutional Commission for the Promotion of the Incorporation of Women in National Development** and formed by representatives of the Ministries for : Labour and Social Wellbeing, Health, Planning and Economic Policy, Commerce and Industry, Agricultural Development and Government and Justice (DIGEDECOM)***
NATIONAL EXECUTIVE ORGANIZATION :	Ministry for Labour and Social Wellbeing
COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS :	The Ministries listed above
DATE OF COMMENCEMENT :	January 1981
DURATION :	Two years
TYPE OF ACTIVITY OF THE PROJECT :	Technical Assistance, Training and the Generation of Income
CONTRIBUTORS :	Government of Panama : B/. 143,999.00 Voluntary Contributions Fund for the United Nations' Decade for Women : B/. 91,709.53
DATE AND PLACE OF SIGNING :	July 1981, in the Office of the First Lady of the Republic, Doña Adela Ruíz de Royo.

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* 'Asociación para la Producción, Elaboración y Manipulación de Alimentos'

** 'Comisión Interinstitucional para la Promoción de la Incorporación de la Mujer al Desarrollo Nacional'

*** 'Ministerios de : Trabajo y Bienestar Social, Salud, Planificación y Política Económica, Comercio e Industrias, Desarrollo Agropecuario y Gobierno y Justicia'

I. JUSTIFICATION

This Project has, as its fundamental premise, that of offering opportunities for training and paid employment to a group of unemployed women in the Colón Province and, in this way, to raise the standard of living of this group of Colón women, the majority of whom are heads of their families.

In addition it will direct its attention to organized groups of women in the urban and rural areas, creating links between them (so preventing rural-to-urban migration) and strengthening some of these groups which are, at the present time, organized into Rural Establishments* or in feminine groups.

II. DESCRIPTION

The Project consists in the creation of two self-management businesses in the Colón Province, one in the urban area and one in the rural area of the Province.

The business in the urban area will be devoted to the production of typical Panamanian or regional foods, such as tamales, carimañolas, turnovers, fried cassava, domplines, various sweetmeats and other products**. These will be sold in restaurants, supermarkets and in other places where a demand exists.

The business in the rural area will be devoted to producing a part of the inputs required by the urban business, such as maize, cassava, poultry and other products. The women to form the rural business will be selected from the already existing organized groups.

Once these businesses have entered the final phase, and when support from international sources and the National Government has been withdrawn the objective will be for the women to have the capabilities to take over the total management of the businesses.

As a result the latter will be converted into two self-management businesses which will form a production company. It has been estimated that this Project will benefit 50 women in the urban area and 50 women in the rural area.

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* 'Asentamientos Campesinos'

** There are no direct English translations for the words left in Spanish.

The profits which will be obtained from the operation of these businesses will be used to promote the creation of other and similar businesses in the Region.

III. ADMINISTRATION

The National Executive Organization is the Ministry for Labour and Social Wellbeing.

During the first two years the Project will be coordinated by an official of the Ministry of Labour who resides in Colón, in conjunction with the Interinstitutional Commission; in addition there would be an Administrator of the Department for the Promotion and Training of Women and a volunteer on behalf of the Voluntary Contributions Fund of the United Nations.

In January 1982 the First Regional Workshop Seminar on Training for Women's Projects was held in Panama under the auspices of the United Nations Organization, and promoted and organized by the Regional Office of C.E.P.A.L. For the purpose of holding this event the Ministry for Labour and Social Wellbeing, through the Department for the Promotion and Training of Women, assumed responsibility for coordination with the support of the National Commission for the Integration of Women in Development.

VI. The Resources of the Department

The Department has both technical and administrative personnel; amongst these are Social Workers who carry out the work of organization, follow-up and evaluation of the various feminine groups. There is a professional solicitor concerned with the legal aspects, a specialist in administration, an Executive Secretary and a Manual Worker. In regard to training in specified activities we have three instructors in cutting-out and making-up and various kinds of handicrafts.

We carry out the work of coordinating the resources at governmental level and also with private persons and international (A.I.D., C.I.M., U.N.O.) and national organizations for the benefit of the groups, so making it possible for us to strengthen our programmes.

It is important to emphasize the great effort made to draw attention to the children of working women. At the present time we have 215 infant centres at national level, including the indigenous zone, and where in addition to giving integral attention to the child guidance can be given to the mother and to the family.

At the present time we are giving priority to the organization of a project for giving attention and guidance to the single mother; this will be presented to the C.I.M. with the object of obtaining external financing.

VII. Projections of the Department

1. To increase the technical and administrative personnel.
2. To continue with the already established groups and to achieve the formation of new self-managing groups (enlarging the radius of action).
3. To ensure the establishment of ongoing contact with the existing feminine civic organization in Panama for continuing support in regard to resources for the benefit of organized groups and to organize them in self-management.
4. To continue holding Workshop Seminars on the Formation of Small Self-management Businesses, under national and international auspices and with their assistance.
5. To obtain technical advice in establishing an information centre for women (library).
6. To carry out a survey at national level, not only with the idea of collecting data and classifying information on women but with the aim of fully understanding the real position of women in Panama. This is to be done in such a way that the results of this investigation will make it possible to strengthen the programmes and projects of our Directorate and of the State in general, and also so that a serial basis will make it possible to carry out an in-depth analysis of the actions carried out, leading us to the implementation of a State policy relating to the feminine problem and, ultimately, of the Panamanian family.

VIII. Publications

The work of the Department is published annually in the Report of the Ministry for Labour and Social Wellbeing, from which can be identified the relevant work brought to completion during the whole of the year.

Also published is a small pamphlet which provides information on the objectives of the Department and its Activities; this is for distribution to the general public who come to our offices in search of guidance.

Also published by way of various means of social communication (press, radio and television) are the relevant events and activities such as Seminars, Round Tables, Panels, Craft Exhibitions, Inter-group Meetings, Working Days, etc.

IX. International Seminars

The Department for the Promotion and Training of Women has taken part in various international events on the subject of women.

In November 1979 it participated in the Regional Seminar on the Integration of Women in the Social and Economic Development of Latin America, held in Caracas, Venezuela.

In July 1980 we took part in the World Conference for the United Nations Decade for Women, held in Copenhagen, Denmark.

In May 1981 we participated in the Meeting of High Level Experts of the Non-aligned and other Developing Countries, held in Havana, Cuba, on the role of women in development.

In September 1981 we assisted at the Regional Seminar held in Quito, Ecuador, on "Coordinating the Training of Women".

In January 1982 we participated in the Regional Workshop Seminar on Training for Women's Projects and Programmes, under the auspices of the United Nations Organization , and which was promoted and organized by the C.E.P.A.L. Regional Office. For the purpose of holding this event the Ministry for Labour and Social Wellbeing, through the Department for the Promotion and Training of Women, assumed responsibility for its coordination, jointly with the support of the National Commission for Women in Development.